

Democratic Rural Conference of New York State

2022 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

DEMOCRATIC RURAL CONFERENCE

CANDIDATE'S NAME and ADDRESS:

Diana Reyna
322 Central Avenue, Apt. 2R
Brooklyn, NY 11221

Position for which you are a candidate: **Lieutenant Governor of the State of New York**

Candidate's Address for All DRC Correspondence: Diana Reyna for NY, PO Box 669, Glen Cove, NY 11542
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THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS WILL BE POSTED ON THE DRC WEB SITE.

Name, cell phone number and e-mail address for the person on your staff who will be your liaison with the DRC:
Jerome Bost, (631) 388-9848, jayjbost@gmail.com

List your qualifications for this office including but not limited to other offices you have held, educational background, etc.

Professional Experience:

- 2019-Present: Principal, Diana Reyna Strategic Consulting
- 2018-2019: Senior Partner, Athena Consulting Group
- 2014-2017: Deputy Brooklyn Borough President
- 2001-2013: Member of New York City Council (34th District)
- 2000-2005: District Leader / State Committee Member (53rd Assembly District)
- 1995-2001: Chief of Staff, Assemblyman Vito Lopez (53rd District)

Education:

- Bachelor's: Pace University

Please address these questions, but make your answers brief so the entire questionnaire does not exceed 4 pages.

1. **ABILITY TO LEAD THE ENTIRE STATE** – What contact and experiences have you had with parts of the state, other than where you currently reside, which demonstrate your recognition of the geographic, demographic and economic diversity of the state and your ability to provide leadership on behalf of all New Yorkers?

After attending college at Pace University's Pleasantville campus, I went to work for the Chair of the New York State Assembly Committee on Housing. During my time in Assemblyman Lopez's office, I would travel with him not only to Albany but to every corner of the state to conduct committee business and learn about the housing issues affecting rural, suburban, and urban New Yorkers.

When I became Deputy Brooklyn Borough President, I sat on the New York City Regional Economic Development Council, which collaborated closely with the state's other Regional Economic Development Councils. In this role, I got to learn a great deal about the economic development initiatives being implemented throughout the state.

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Since I announced my candidacy in February, my running mate Tom Suozzi and I have held a series of regional “tele town halls” that have touched every corner of the state. We are currently doing our second round of these events, which will last until early May. Our tele town halls have reached tens of thousands of prime Democratic voters from every region of our great state. During these events, Tom and I have had the opportunity to listen to Democratic primary voters tell us about the issues most impacting their lives.

Our tele town halls take place early in the week (Monday or Tuesday). Then, the following weekend, Tom and I travel to the region we called to meet people in-person. We have had hundreds of New Yorkers come to these in-person events, and it has been a privilege to meet so many Democratic primary voters who are engaged in the process and want to learn more about my campaign. The response has truly been overwhelming.

When I am Lieutenant Governor, I will bring to the table my experience from Brooklyn Borough Hall and New York City Hall, as well as the lessons I have learned from people like my former boss Eric Adams, to serve all New Yorkers and tackle the issues most important to them.

2. KNOWLEDGE OF THE ISSUES – What issues do you believe are of most concern to voters in rural counties, and what will be your message in addressing those issues?

Taxes and Affordability:

New York has some of the highest taxes in the entire country. Property taxes in particular are crushing low and middle income New Yorkers, including senior citizens and others who are house rich but income poor. Many areas in Upstate New York have the highest effective property tax rates (comparing property taxes to home values) in the nation. The biggest reason why New York’s property taxes are so high is that we spend more per K-12 student (14% of the FY2023 State Budget) than any other state, even though our outcomes are lacking. The Suozzi-Reyna Administration will increase State Aid to school districts that lower their property taxes. We will also bring social services directly into school buildings to help struggling students and make the dollars we spend on public education go further.

Rural New Yorkers have also been dealing with the impacts of high inflation, which have been exacerbated by the recent spike in gas prices. The Suozzi-Reyna campaign has been calling on New York State to provide gas tax relief since I joined in February. The current Administration, on the other hand, spent months being non-committal, going back and forth on the issue. I am pleased that, thanks in large part to the public pressure we put on the Administration, gas tax relief through the end of the year was included in the State Budget.

Broadband:

Because of the federal infrastructure bill recently passed, which included \$65 billion for broadband, New York has an opportunity to finally bring high quality internet to every corner of our state. We need to use New York’s share of this funding to install new lines and repair poorly installed lines so that rural, suburban, and urban areas of New York can have state-of-the-art broadband internet.

Agriculture:

We must ensure that New York’s agricultural industry remains healthy for the long-term, and that means ensuring that we have a pipeline of highly qualified agricultural workers. We should expand agricultural curriculum options in our middle and high schools so that students can get a head start. We should also provide student loan forgiveness programs for college graduates who commit to keeping their agribusinesses in our state.

When I served as Deputy Brooklyn Borough President, one of my initiatives I was most proud of was teaching students about farming by installing hydroponic and aquaponic greenhouses in schools. As part of this effort, I worked closely with farmers from DRC counties. Today, the program has expanded to over 100 schools throughout New York City.

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3. PARTY BUILDING – How have you expressed and demonstrated a commitment toward building our party statewide and what are your ideas for future party building, specific to rural counties?

Too many Downstate politicians only start to care about DRC counties when election season rolls around. I will not be one of them. I want to understand what is happening on the ground in DRC counties so that I can keep track of the progress we are making building the New York State Democratic Party. As Lieutenant Governor, I will hold a monthly meeting with the county Democratic Party Chairs from all DRC counties and will hold an annual meeting with every county Democratic Party. When I first became Deputy Brooklyn Borough President, I held similar meetings with every Community Board Chair and District Manager. They would tell me, “No one from Borough Hall has ever done this.” I know that the only way to truly understand what is happening in a community is repeated communication with those who represent it.

For too long, the New York State Democratic Party has been controlled by insiders who either don’t know or don’t care about the issues impacting rural voters. That is a major reason why rural voters have fled the Democratic Party in droves in recent years. In almost the past half century, the State Party has had only three chairs or co-chairs from DRC counties. When Tom Suozzi and I are elected, we will bring in much needed fresh blood that will include a State Party Chair or Co-Chair from a DRC county.

4. In the event of a primary for the office you are seeking, will you support the winner of the Democratic primary? (This calls for a YES or NO answer ONLY.)

Yes.

5. FAIRNESS IN SHARING POLITICAL POWER - How have you and how will you defend and further the rights of small counties to be represented in the decision making process and in governmental and political positions?

When I served on the New York City Council, the vast majority of my constituents were from Brooklyn, but I also represented a small portion of Queens. Nonetheless, I made sure that I represented my Queens constituents just as actively as my Brooklyn ones, travelling to all of the equivalent meetings in both boroughs.

When Tom Suozzi and I are Governor and Lieutenant Governor, we will hold a monthly meeting with DRC county Democratic legislators so they can share the policies and legislation most important to their constituents. To be clear, these monthly meetings will not merely be photo opportunities or a chance for Tom and I to “check the box”; these meetings will play a major role in driving the policy priorities of our Administration.

6. INCLUSION – If elected, how would your administration include the people from DRC counties and address the issues of concern in those counties?

People from outside of the New York City area have historically been underrepresented in senior positions in the New York State Government. When Governor Hochul, who publicly prides herself on her Western New York roots, was elected, it looked like that might finally change. However, the Governor has instead packed her Administration with Downstaters and Albany insiders.

In contrast to the current Administration, senior appointments to the Suozzi-Reyna Administration will include representation from DRC counties that exceeds their proportion of New York’s population. If possible, we would like to ask the DRC to begin collecting resumes for us so that we can prepare for the Suozzi-Reyna campaign this fall and Administration next year.

7. VOTER APPEAL – What qualities or experiences do you have that would attract support from voters in DRC counties, not just from Democrats but also from non-enrolled voters and cross-over Republicans?

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When you are inclusive about listening to peoples' concerns, it doesn't matter whether a voter is a Democrat or a Republican. Finding solutions to problems that DRC county residents share is the best way to appeal to a broad range of voters. Partisan politics is less important than delivering.

Tom and I are the only candidates who have laid out a clear vision to address the issues that voters, both Democrats and non-Democrats, care about:

- Reducing taxes and making New York more affordable
- Addressing the rise in crime
- Finally helping students and changing the culture in our troubled schools
- Rooting out the Albany corruption that has plagued New York for too long

New York voters, both Democrats and non-Democrats, are tired of Albany business as usual. The indictment and resignation of Brian Benjamin is just the latest in a long list of scandals that have caused New Yorkers to lose faith in their government. Tom and I are taking on the status quo in order to finally bring a new era to Albany. That is why we are the best positioned candidates to handily defeat our Republican opponents this fall.

8. CAMPAIGN IN DRC COUNTIES – How would you campaign in DRC counties? Will you personally appear with local candidates?

Yes. As part of the tele town hall series I discussed in my answer to question #1, I already have calls and subsequent in-person events scheduled in DRC counties over the next month. I plan to have a busy schedule that will include many appearances with local candidates in DRC counties. During these visits, I will also meet with the candidates one-on-one to learn about the issues facing their communities. This will allow me to more effectively respond their communities' needs when I am Lieutenant Governor.

9. OTHER CRITERIA – Please set forth anything else you want us to consider.

The indictment and resignation of Lieutenant Governor Benjamin was a sad day for New York. Since the 2006 election, 17 people have served in New York's top four statewide positions (Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and Comptroller), and Benjamin is the 10th to leave in scandal. This should be a wake-up call for anyone who still needs it that our State Government and our State Democratic Party needs to change.

New York Democrats must ensure that we win the Lieutenant Governor race this fall. In order to do that, we cannot afford to nominate someone who lacks any government experience or whose views are so out of the mainstream that they would alienate swing voters.

I spent four years as Deputy Brooklyn Borough President, 12 years on the New York City Council, and five years as a District Leader and member of the State Committee. I have the political experience to easily win the general election and the experience as a public official to successfully step into the Lieutenant Governor role on day one.

I understand land use, I understand government financing, I understand economic development. I understand these issues because I have worked on them for my entire career. My experience will translate across New York because New Yorkers in all counties want the same thing: a good job, a safe neighborhood, and a secure retirement.

I am the Lieutenant Governor candidate best positioned to win this race and to hit the ground running next January to serve the people of DRC counties. I would be honored to have your endorsement in this race.

April 15, 2022

Date



Signature of the Candidate